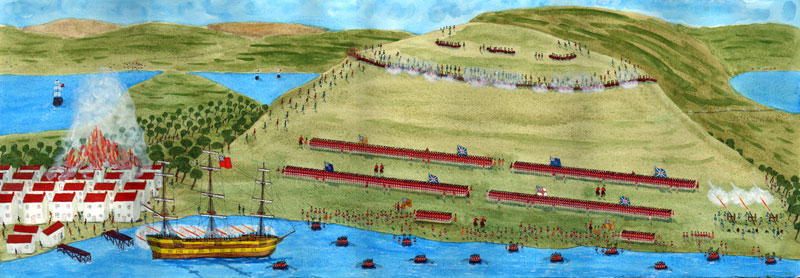
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| The Battle of Bunker Hill 1775 **Battle:** Bunker Hill  **War:** American Revolution  **Date:** 17th June 1775  http://www.britishbattles.com/images/bunker-hill/bunker-hill.jpg **Battle of Bunker Hill**  **Place:** On the Charlestown Peninsula on the North side of Boston Harbour.  **Combatants:** British troops of the Boston garrison against troops of the American Continental Army.  **Generals:** Major General Howe against General Artemas Ward and General Israel Putnam  **Size of the armies:** 2,400 British troops against 1,500 Americans.  **Uniforms, arms and equipment:** The British grenadiers, light infantry and battalion company men wore red coats, the headgear of the companies, bearskin fronted mitre caps, tricorne hats and caps, and were armed with muskets and bayonets. The British had light guns and were supported by the heavy guns of the fleet. The Americans were armed with muskets or whatever firearms they could obtain, a few bayonets and some light guns.  Map of the battle of Bunker Hill 1775 **Battle of Bunker Hill** |  |  |

**Winner:** While the British drove the Americans from the Charlestown peninsula it was with heavy loss. The battle was at the time considered to be an American defeat but has since been lifted to the ranks of a heroic stands against forces of oppression.

**British Regiments:**   
The flank companies (grenadiers and light companies) of the 4th, 10th, 18th, 22nd, 23rd, 35th, 59th, 63rd and 65th.

**[](http://buy.britishbattles.com/acatalog/Tim_Reese_CD_s.html)  
The British 5th Regiment of Foot (from Tim Reese’s CD Rom of 116 illustrations of British and American   
Regiments from the Revolutionary War. For details on how to buy the CD click on the illustration).**

5th Foot later Northumberland Fusiliers and now the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers  
38th Foot later the South Staffordshire Regiment and now the Staffordshire Regiment  
43rd Foot later 1st Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and now 1st Bn Royal Green Jackets.  
47th Foot later the North Lancashire Regiment and now the Queen’s Royal Lancashire Regiment  
52nd Foot later 2nd Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and now 1st Bn Royal Green Jackets  
Marines: now the Royal Marines

**[](http://www.britishbattles.com/images/bunker-hill/bunker-hill-09-l.jpg)**  
**The Battle of Bunker Hill 17th June 1775**  
(c) [Illustration by John Mackenzie 2009 - c](http://www.britishbattles.com/images/bunker-hill/bunker-hill-09-l.jpg)[lick to enlarge](http://www.britishbattles.com/images/bunker-hill/bunker-hill-09-l.jpg).

**Account:**   
With the outbreak of the war General Gage, the British commander in chief, found himself blockaded in Boston by the American Continental Army, occupying the hills to the West of the city. Gage resolved to seize the Charlestown peninsula across the harbour. Before he could act, on the night of 16th June 1775 around 1,500 American troops of the Massachusetts regiments and Putnam’s Connecticut regiment occupied Breed’s Hill and Bunker Hill on the peninsula. The American troops began to build a redoubt on Breed’s Hill. The fortification was complete by the morning, after a night of frenzied work. The presence of the Americans on the peninsula was observed by His Majesty’s Ship Lively which opened fire on them.

Plans were hurriedly put in motion by the British to attack the Americans and drive them from their position. Major General Howe, one of the three generals sent from Britain to assist General Gage, was given the command. While the preparations were in train the Americans extended their fortifications from the redoubt to the sea shore, to prevent a flank attack. More American troops gathered on Bunker Hill but few of them could be persuaded to move to the forward positions on Breed’s Hill.

**[](http://affiliates.art.com/get.art?T=15049472&A=333916&L=8&P=12015131&S=2&Y=0)**  
**The death of the American General Warren at the climax of the Battle of Bunker Hill by John Trumbull**[**Click here or on image to buy a Print**](http://affiliates.art.com/get.art?T=15049472&A=333916&L=8&P=12015131&S=2&Y=0)

Howe landed with his force on the southern shore of the peninsular and directed the light infantry to attack the section of American line at the sea shore. Gage and Howe would have been well advised to have landed in the rear of the American position.. It is likely that the British senior officers discounted the ability of the American troops to resist a frontal attack and overestimated the ability of their own troops to make one.

  
**British Grenadiers attack the redoubt on Breed's Hill.  A highly stylised picture   
that does not portray the reality of the turnout or drill of British troops of the time.**

The light infantry column was repelled with heavy casualties. General Howe now launched a frontal assault on the redoubt with the main body of his troops. This attack was driven back with heavy loss, in spite of an American shortage of ammunition. During the attack the British left wing suffered from the fire of Americans in the town of Charlestown and the town was set ablaze.

The attacks should have been preceded by a bombardment from the field artillery but it was found that the 6 pounder guns had been supplied with 12 pounder balls.

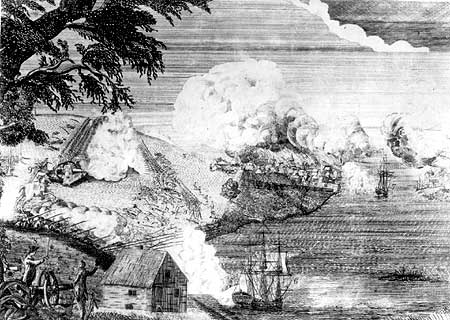
A second attack was launched along the length of the American entrenchments and was again driven back with heavy loss.

A final attack was made, concentrating on the redoubt and centre of the American position. The American ammunition was all but exhausted and this final assault carried the redoubt, forcing the Americans to retreat and leave the peninsula. They were not vigorously pursued.

  
**The British attack on Breed's Hill**

**Casualties:** The British suffered some 1,150 killed and wounded or nearly half of the force engaged. The American casualties were estimated at 450 killed and wounded.

**Follow-up:** The British took over the Bunker and Breed’s Hill positions and fortified them, holding them until they evacuated Boston at the end of the year. The battle was the first action for the Continental Army and showed how much work there was to be done in moulding an effective army. While most of the soldiers in the entrenched works fought tenaciously, the intended reinforcements on Bunker Hill refused to advance to the support of their comrades and there was the greatest confusion between the officers as to precedence.

  
**The British attack on Breed's Hill seen from behind Charlestown**

The battle had a number of lessons for the British. The senior officers had little idea how to conduct a battle with any degree of sophistication. Howe learnt his mistake in making a frontal assault. At every subsequent battle, where possible he carried out flanking assaults. The British troops were indisciplined and disorganised. The guns for which the wrong ammunition was provided were almost certainly battalion weapons manned by foot rather than Royal Artillery.

For both sides Bunker Hill was the start of a journey in military education.

The illustration of the line of grenadiers given below is misleading. It is likely that the soldiers could not be brought to press the attack properly until the final assault, for which they were ordered to leave their packs and to advance without firing. It is unlikely that the British troops were capable of drill of the precision suggested by the picture or even the smart turnout illustrated.

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| The use of the flank companies (grenadiers and light infantry) is a suggestion that these companies may have been the only parts of the battalions considered reliable.  It is an understandable feature of accounts of the American Revolution that the British forces are portrayed as more competent and disciplined than in fact they were. One of the causes of discontent in New England prior to the war had been the indiscipline and oppressive behaviour of British regular troops.  **References:** • History of the British Army by Sir John Fortescue • The War of the Revolution by Christopher Ward |  | http://www.britishbattles.com/images/bunker-hill/putnam.jpg **General Israel Putnam** |

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| **[Redcoats and Rebels - The American Revolution through British Eyes](http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0393322939/britishbatt04-21)** |  | [Redcoats and Rebels: The American Revolution through](http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0393322939/britishbatt04-21) |